STATEMENT BY MR. S. M. KRISHNA, MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AT THE COMMONWEALTH FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

Excellencies Foreign Ministers of Commonwealth Member States,

Secretary General of the Commonwealth,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by applauding the manner in which the Government of Trinidad & Tobago has chaired the Commonwealth in the past year, in particular the successful hosting of the CHOGM in Port of Spain in November 2009. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the support of my government to Australia as the chair of the next Summit to be held in 2011 in Perth.

With its unique membership structure, substantive orientation and style of functioning based on consensus-building, informality and goodwill, the Commonwealth provides its members with a strong sense of purpose and utility. The Commonwealth has also devoted much of its activities to the needs and interests of its larger developing country membership, including 32 Small Island Developing States and the Least Developed Countries. India, on its part, also has a strong and abiding interest in promoting, maintaining and strengthening healthy democratic institutions and the rule of law, which are the primary objectives of the Commonwealth.

At the CHOGM 2009, the Prime Minister of India had announced several new initiatives in support of the Commonwealth. I am happy to share with you that all of these initiatives have already been implemented or are in the final stages of implementation. These pertain to training of diplomats, the Commonwealth Partnership
Platform Portal (CP3) portal doubling our contribution to the Commonwealth Media Development Fund, creation of 250 additional slots for training civilians from Commonwealth countries under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, and in addition, providing on a bilateral basis 1,564 training slots to ITEC partner countries in the Commonwealth.

I am happy to learn that 2009 CHOGM mandates are successfully being implemented. During 2009 CHOGM, the need to conclude negotiations on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism on a priority basis was emphasised. It is important that this happens early, preferably during the current Session of the UN General Assembly.

Like other Member States of the Commonwealth, India believes that the future successes of the Commonwealth rest with young people. India is, therefore, supportive of developing a new assessed scale of contributions for the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) on a consensus basis as early as possible.

I am convinced that the Commonwealth Secretariat will continue its pro-active role in other areas as mandated by 2009 CHOGM such as education, health, energy security, food security, migration, human rights, combating corruption, human trafficking, reform of international institutions, trade and investment, and assisting the small states to implement crisis-resilient strategies. It is also our hope that the ‘Commonwealth Connects’ would promote strategic partnerships and help member states build ICT capacity.

This year the Secretary General and our Permanent Representatives have interacted to bring to the UN the unique perspective of the Commonwealth on current issues in the global discourse. This interaction could be facilitated by regular contact of the Commonwealth Office in New York with the UN Missions of Commonwealth countries on matters of interest.
Before I conclude, I would like to mention that India eagerly looks forward to welcoming sportspersons and officials from Commonwealth countries to the Delhi Commonwealth Games, due to begin the coming Sunday.

Thank you.